

March 1, 2023

Written testimony of Peter Mongillo, Administrator The Willows Nursing and Rehabilitation Center,
Concerning Skilled Nursing Facility Funding For SFY 2024 and SFY 2025

Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Peter Mongillo. I am the Administrator at the Willows in Woodbridge, Connecticut. The Willows has been providing nursing home care in our community for 30 years. We are a 90 nursing home, and we have 125 employee working at our facility, and we are members of the Connecticut Association of Health Care Facilities (CAHCF).

A Period of Trauma and Resilience for our Nursing Home Residents and Caregivers

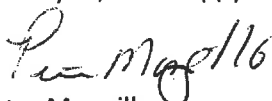
Now three years into this unrelenting COVID-19 pandemic and public health emergency and I can say that our nursing home, the residents we serve, and our employees, continue to be challenged like in no other time in our history of providing services in Connecticut. I can also say that our nursing home is as determined as ever, and we feel that each week we are getting closer to a time when we can say the pandemic is behind us.

Ravaging Inflation, Severe Staffing Shortages is Hindering Admissions, Increasing Labor Costs and Slowing the Nursing Home Recovery

Never before experienced inflation and the ongoing staffing crisis are the top issues that are not addressed in the budget recommendation. Inflation. We are losing ground, the expectations and challenges on the industry continue to grow, making it more difficult to provide the best service to our seniors. Here are the examples of what is happening. Just like in the community, the cost of all of our services are rising, whether it be the cost of labor to attract potential employees, the cost of food and supplies. The proposed funding for nursing homes does not recognize what is happening on inflation, and we are asking you to recognize the real inflation that we are experiencing in the budget. Staffing Crisis. The severe staffing shortages our nursing home have faced during the pandemic is not letting up. Here is what is happening. Labor costs are out of control, with the high use of agency staffing, use of over time, early retirements related to the ongoing pandemic. These are all having a big impact on center operations. The nursing homes play an enormous part in the healthcare stream. We are right in the middle between the acute care needs of a patient and the ability for them to transition home safely and hopefully avoid subsequent returns to the hospital. In our highly regulated industry, the nursing homes need to have proper funding in order to meet the continuing expectation of providing excellent care to our seniors.

Our skilled nursing facility needs more resources to boost the pay of our extraordinary employees, but the proposed budget doesn't address this issue. The resources the state legislature previously provided us to boost staff pay has made all the difference over the last two years, but our employees are losing ground against inflation, just as we are. More funding is needed in the budget to address the unbelievable inflation we are facing and to help us with our soaring labor costs.

Thank you, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



Peter Mongillo